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Viewing cable 07PORTAUPRINCE948, AMBASSADOR/PM REVIEW BILATERAL AGENDA

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| Reference ID | Created | Released | Classification | Origin |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 07PORTAUPRINCE948 | 2007-05-25 15:23 | 2011-08-30 01:44 | CONFIDENTIAL | Embassy Port Au Prince |

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/24/2012
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR/PM REVIEW BILATERAL AGENDA

REF: PAP 893

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The Ambassador on May 16 called on Prime Minister Alexis to discuss with him President Preval's visit to Washington and review other bilateral issues, including cooperation on money-laundering, illegal emigration, and Cite Soleil development. The PM reported that Preval had expressed his great satisfaction with his Washington program, and looked forward to moving forward on the issues raised, particularly HOPE and narcotics cooperation. He asked that the Embassy continue to coordinate the Haiti Strategic Initiative (HSI) with appropriate senior officials, and informed her that he planned to initiate Cite Soliel development task force among GoH officials and the donors. The PM echoed the Ambassador's concern over the spike in illegal emigration, and said the government would try to increase enforcement against alien smugglers. Alexis expressed dismay over parliamentary investigation into the death of a Gonaives judge and calls to remove the justice minister (reftel), opining that the attack was really directed against him, orchestrated by Youri Latortue. Despite having endured a difficult previous week in dealing with the charges against the justice minister and the tragedy in the Turks and Caicos, the Prime Minister was his usual business-like self and seemed focused and informed on the issues raised by the Ambassador. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Prime Minister Alexis relayed that Preval had told him that he was very pleased with his program in Washington, and expected an increase in attention and VIP visits to Haiti as a result. He stressed that the government continued to focus on taking advantage of the trade preferences granted in the HOPE legislation, and looked forward further progress in anti-narcotics cooperation. The Ambassador raised the planned visit of Treasury Department officials to sign an money-laundering cooperation agreement, and asked where the GoH stood. The Prime Minister replied that officials in the finance and justice ministries had issues with the terms of reference, but had worked out alternative language that the GoH would share with the embassy. The PM looked forward to completing the negotiations of the text and signing the agreement, noting that President Preval would shortly launch an anti-corruption initiative (septel).

¶3. (C) The Ambassador expressed her sympathy for the victims whose boat had capsized in the Turks and Caicos, and asked how illegal emigration by sea could be discouraged. The PM agreed that increased emigration was a concern, and said that the government would ask the executive representatives' ("Delegues") Departments in the northern to form a network to identify the organizers and boat captains smuggling to target their law enforcement. The Ambassador informed the Prime Minister that HSI implementation was proceeding rapidly and that we hoped to continue to work closely with the government. The Prime Minister asked for closer coordination on specific projects. He had been informed that the USG wished to turn an abandoned building into a police station, which Minister for Public Works Varrella hoped to turn into a community center. To better coordinate efforts in Cite Soleil, he would form a task force among GoH and international officials. The Ambassador welcomed the idea and advised the PM to keep the group small and focused. (Note: The PM on May 23 hosted the kick-off meeting of that group. The acting HSI coordinator and a USAID official represented post. End Note.)

¶4. (C) The Ambassador noted the USG's continued interest in

justice reform legislation, currently before the parliament, and hoped that the movement against the justice minister would not delay consideration of the legislation. The PM quickly interjected that the attacks against the justice minister were in fact aimed at weakening him -- the justice minister simply represented an easier target. The justice minister had accurately stated that he had not summoned deceased judge St. Pierre to Port-au-Prince, but that ministry officials probably had. People now confused the minister with the ministry. In any event, Senator Youri Latortue was orchestrating the campaign against the government, spreading rumors behind the scenes that the PM had organized a conspiracy to kill St. Pierre who was killed in a traffic accident. The PM claimed that Latortue had organized the demonstrators who had thrown rocks at him during his visit to Gonaives, the PM's hometown, to attend St. Pierre's funeral. One week later, a group of the PM's supporters among the Gonaives elite asked to meet with and relayed that the local police force was corrupt and controlled by Latortue. They had asked to meet the PM outside of Gonaives, because they did not feel safe holding the meeting in the city. As a result, the Prime Minister said he was working with UNPol and the justice ministry to remove those officers, and for UNPol to take a more active role in policing Gonaives.

¶5. (C) Comment. The Prime Minister was thoroughly beleaguered and on the defensive the previous week over allegations of government involvement in St. Pierre's death and trying to arrange for the return of the remains of the deceased emigrants from the Turks and Caicos, while lurid allegations that Turks and Caicos authorities had purposely sunk their vessel inflamed public sentiment. Still, he seemed focused on the issues at hand and eager to advance the bilateral agenda. He was surprisingly matter-of-fact in revealing his concerns about Youri Latortue and admitting his supporters in his own home town were running somewhat scared.

Post will report on the political dynamic and Latortue's role in Gonaives septel.

SANDERSON